

DIVISION OF CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE STATE OF MONTANA



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EXHIBIT NO. 4
DATE 3-11-11
BILL NO. HB 354

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HB 354

House bill 354 as written would decrease the minimum level of safety for residents of rental properties in Montana.

The provisions for carbon monoxide detectors were just passed last session in SB 161 and the requirements for carbon monoxide alarms are included in the 2009 edition of the International Residential Code.

Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless, colorless gas created when fuels burn incompletely, and can cause flu like symptoms and in severe instances can cause death within minutes. Carbon monoxide is a product of combustion and can come from gas-fired appliances, charcoal grills, wood-burning furnaces or fireplaces and motor vehicles.

Carbon monoxide is the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in the United States. In Montana from 2003 – 2008, 23 accidental deaths were caused by carbon monoxide poisoning.

Carbon monoxide detectors are designed to alert the occupants when the level of carbon monoxide is elevated, before the average adult would experience any symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.

In 2005 municipal fire departments responded to an estimated 61,100 non-fire carbon monoxide incidents where carbon monoxide was present nationwide. Approximately 20,000 people are treated for exposure to carbon monoxide and 400 people die from unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning annually.

As a fire fighter I remember responding to one call in a rental residential where 7 victims of carbon monoxide were found in one apartment unit. Several victims were unresponsive and had to be transported out of state for advanced treatment. Because there were no CO detectors present all of the responders had to be checked for CO poisoning because of the time spent inside the apartment.

I recently purchased new CO detectors for my home and found them for under \$30.00 each.

The Montana State Fire Marshal supports installing carbon monoxide detectors in all residential dwellings to enhance the safety of Montana's residents.

We ask you to please oppose HB 354.

Pat Clinch, Deputy State Fire Marshal
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Exposing an Invisible Killer

A Factsheet on the Dangers of Carbon Monoxide

Each year in America, unintentional carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning claims more than 400 lives and sends another 20,000 people to hospital emergency rooms for treatment.

The U. S. Fire Administration (USFA) and the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) would like you to know that there are simple steps you can take to protect yourself from deadly carbon monoxide fumes.

UNDERSTANDING THE RISK

WHAT IS CARBON MONOXIDE?

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless and toxic gas. Because it is impossible to see, taste or smell the toxic fumes, CO can kill you before you are aware it is in your home. At lower levels of exposure, CO causes mild effects that are often mistaken for the flu. These symptoms include headaches, dizziness, disorientation, nausea and fatigue. The effects of CO exposure can vary greatly from person to person depending on age, overall health and the concentration and length of exposure.

WHERE DOES CARBON MONOXIDE COME FROM?

CO gas can come from several sources: gas-fired appliances, charcoal grills, wood-burning furnaces or fireplaces and motor vehicles.

WHO IS AT RISK?

Everyone is at risk for CO poisoning. Medical experts believe that unborn babies, infants, children, senior citizens and people with heart or lung problems are at even greater risk for CO poisoning.

WHAT ACTIONS DO I TAKE IF MY CARBON MONOXIDE ALARM GOES OFF?

What you need to do if your carbon monoxide alarm goes off depends on whether anyone is feeling ill or not.

IF NO ONE IS FEELING ILL:

1. Silence the alarm.
2. Turn off all appliances and sources of combustion (i.e. furnace and fireplace).
3. Ventilate the house with fresh air by opening doors and windows.
4. Call a qualified professional to investigate the source of the possible CO buildup.

IF ILLNESS IS A FACTOR:

1. Evacuate all occupants immediately.
2. Determine how many occupants are ill and determine their symptoms.
3. Call your local emergency number and when relaying information to the dispatcher, include the number of people feeling ill.
4. Do not re-enter the home without the approval of a fire department representative.
5. Call a qualified professional to repair the source of the CO.

PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY FROM CO POISONING

- Install at least one carbon monoxide alarm with an audible warning signal evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), near the sleeping areas and outside individual bedrooms. Carbon monoxide alarms measure levels of CO over time and are designed

to sound an alarm before an average, healthy adult would experience symptoms. It is very possible that you may not be experiencing symptoms when you hear the alarm. This does not mean that CO is not present.

- Have a qualified professional check all fuel burning appliances, furnaces, venting and chimney systems at least once a year.
- Never use your range or oven to help heat your home and never use a charcoal grill or hibachi in your home or garage.
- Never keep a car running in a garage. Even if the garage doors are open, normal circulation will not provide enough fresh air to reliably prevent a dangerous buildup of CO.
- When purchasing an existing home, have a qualified technician evaluate the integrity of the heating and cooking systems, as well as the sealed spaces between the garage and house. The presence of a carbon monoxide alarm in your home can save your life in the event of CO buildup.

For more information contact:

The U. S. Fire Administration
16825 South Seton Avenue
Emmitsburg, MD 21727

or

Visit the USFA Web site:
www.usfa.fema.gov



**Homeland
Security**

Carbon monoxide alarm credited for saving Calgary families

CALGARY HERALD JANUARY 31, 2011

CALGARY - The Calgary Fire Department credits a carbon monoxide detector for saving the lives of two Calgary families Monday morning.

Shortly before 9 a.m., firefighters were called to the 1000 block of 1st Avenue N.W. to a complaint of a carbon monoxide leak.

They arrived to find both units of a duplex with carbon monoxide levels as high as 170 parts per million – far exceeding the 12.5 ppm standard for a safety evacuation.

“Thankfully, a carbon monoxide detector installed in one of the units alarmed and alerted the resident to the grave danger,” the fire department said in a release.

The residents, including an infant, were evacuated from the homes.

The source of the leak was under investigation.

Carbon monoxide, a colourless, odourless, tasteless gas, can cause illness or death.

The deadly gas is produced when a fuel such as gasoline, natural gas, propane or wood burns incompletely.

Fuel-burning appliances can produce carbon monoxide if they are not installed, used and maintained properly, the fire department cautioned.

Flue-like symptoms can include shortness of breath, nausea, headaches and light-headedness.

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